DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 229 UD 030 132

AUTHOR Mueller, Siegfried G.
TITLE Survey of Local School Council Members, 1992: A Report on the Findings.
INSTITUTION Chicago Public Schools, IL. Dept. of Research, Evaluation, and Planning.
PUB DATE Sep 92
NOTE 23p.
PUB TYPE Statistical Data (110) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitudes; Educational Change; Educational Improvement; *Educational Planning; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Policy Formation; *School Based Management; School Districts; Surveys; Tables (Data); *Training
IDENTIFIERS *Chicago Public Schools IL; *Local School Councils; Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This report is based on a survey of local school council (LSC) members in Chicago (Illinois) that was conducted in 1992 to determine and share the thoughts of LSC members on planning for school improvements and educational change, implementing policies, training, and fulfilling responsibilities and duties. Nearly 850 council members responded. Findings indicate that LSCs are involved in developing school improvement plans, planning and monitoring school improvement initiatives, budgeting expenditures, and publicizing and holding mandated meetings. Council members also provided school principals with direction by establishing policies and recommending specific actions. While many participated in training beyond that mandated by legislation, many did not participate in sessions that addressed educational theory, personnel selection, and reform legislation. Council members rated the performance of their district service center as "above average," that of the central service center "below average," and themselves "well above average." Council members noted improvements and positive change, with conditions considered worse than in 1991 only in the area of sufficient supplies. Concerns about finance, central administration, extent of participation and role clarity, and the future of reform were addressed in open-ended questions. (Contains 7 references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 375 229

REPORT

RESEARCH, EVALUATION & PLANNING

1992 SURVEY OF LOCAL SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS: A REPORT ON THE FINDINGS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

F. Schuster

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U030132

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Ted D. Kimbrough
General Superintendent of Schools

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1992 SURVEY OF LOCAL SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS: A REPORT ON THE FINDINGS

Prepared by Siegfried G. Mueller
Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning

STEINMETZ ACADEMIC CENTRE
Dr. Siegfried G. Mueller
3030 N. Mobile Room 113
Chicago, Illinois 60634

TED D. KIMBROUGH
General Superintendent of Schools

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 1992

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Florence B. Cox, President
Juan S. Cruz, Vice President

Stephen R. Ballis
Saundra Bishop
Clinton Bristow, Jr.
Charles E. Curtis, Sr.
James D. Flanagan
The Rev. Darryl F. James
Rev. Nathaniel Jarrett
Pamela A. Lenane
Albert N. Logan
Bertha G. Magana
Ashish Sen
John F. Valinote
Maria J. Vargas

It is the policy of the Board of Education of the City of Chicago not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, age, handicap unrelated to ability, or sex in its educational program or employment policies or practices.

Inquiries concerning the application of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the regulations promulgated thereunder concerning sex discrimination should be referred to the Title IX Coordinator, Board of Education of the City of Chicago, 1819 West Pershing Road, Chicago, Illinois 60609.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY v

INTRODUCTION 1

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS 3

School Improvement Planning 3

Recommendations to Principals 3

Council Meetings 5

Council Organization 6

Training Areas 7

Council Assessment and Involvement 10

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS 13

Reform Concerns 14

CONCLUSION 17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on a survey of Local School Council (LSC) members conducted by the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Planning between March 1 and July 1, 1992. The survey's main purpose was to ascertain and then share the thoughts of Local School Council members on various issues such as planning for school improvements, implementing policies, and fulfilling responsibilities and duties. Additional information was gathered on the training provided for new council members and the concerns of the councils regarding school reform.

Nearly 850 council members responded to the survey. Major findings indicated that LSCs were involved in developing School Improvement Plans, planning and monitoring school improvement initiatives, budgeting expenditures, and publicizing and holding mandated meetings. In addition, council members provided their principals with direction by establishing policies and recommending specific actions. They spent considerable time fulfilling these duties.

Many council members participated in training sessions beyond those mandated by legislation; however, many did not participate in sessions that addressed educational theory, personnel selection, and reform legislation.

The council members continue to rate the performance of their District Service Center "above average"; the Central Service Center, "below average"; and themselves, "well above average."

Council members noted improvements and positive changes in staff and student performance, school management, and general school conditions. In only one category -- sufficient supplies -- nearly half of the council members indicated that conditions were worse than in 1991.

On the open-ended questions, council members voiced concerns about finance, central administration, lack of participation and role clarity, and the future of reform.

INTRODUCTION

In December 1988, the efforts of many citizens ensured the passage of the most radical reform legislation in the nation to date: The School Reform Act (Illinois PA 85-1418). This legislation enabled Local School Councils in Chicago to adopt and implement effective educational strategies designed to improve student performance through school-based management and shared decision-making.

Through election, each Local School Council (LSC) is composed of six parents, two community representatives, two teachers, one student (at the high school level), and the school principal. The council is accountable for the election of officers and the adoption of by-laws, rules, and operating procedures that do not conflict with the Open Meetings or Freedom of Information Acts. Parent members have the majority vote on the LSCs. LSCs now perform many functions formerly provided by the central administrative offices and Board of Education. LSC responsibilities and duties include:

- Evaluating the principal's performance and deciding if his/her four-year contract should be renewed.
- Approving and amending the school expenditure plan prepared by the principal in consultation with the LSC and the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC).
- Approving the School Improvement Plan (SIP) developed by the principal in consultation with the LSC, staff, parents, and community residents.
- Monitoring the principal's implementation of the SIP and budget.
- Making recommendations in areas such as staff and textbook selection.
- Advising the principal in matters regarding attendance and discipline.

Performing these tasks requires specific knowledge of the school system, educational practice, and governance procedures on the part of the persons elected. It is toward this end that a wide variety of training workshops is provided for LSC members.

After three years of school reform, everyone concerned with school improvement is interested in learning how well the LSCs are functioning and to what extent they are bringing about reform. To help provide answers to these questions, the Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning conducted its second annual survey of LSC members in the late spring of 1992. A total of 849 usable responses were received from council members at 350 schools. Respondents consisted of the following members of Local School Councils:

1992 LSC Survey Respondents

LSC Group	Number
Parents	320
Teachers	217
Principals	183
Community representatives	93
LSC members not identified	36

The survey asked the LSC members to rate (Better, No Change, Worse) various activities, conditions, and outcomes at their schools. Of particular interest was the area of training; specifically, are the nearly 6,000 council members -- including the 2,400 who are newly elected -- receiving the training they require to perform their designated tasks confidently and efficiently?

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS

Local School Councils (LSC) form a structure in which members can function effectively to improve their school. This framework, however, must be one in which all members participate fully and knowledgeably. Rules, procedures, and guidelines are an integral part of the structure as they provide members with a definition of their roles and responsibilities. Among their many responsibilities, the LSCs must approve the expenditure plans prepared and administered by the principal. These expenditures support programs specified in the local School Improvement Plan.

School Improvement Planning

Approximately 90 percent of the respondents indicated that they voted on the school expenditure plan, and 67 percent indicated that they actively participated in their school's expenditure planning process. A majority of the respondents reported that the principal (91 percent) and council members (86 percent) were involved in the expenditure planning process at their school. Approximately 70 percent of the respondents related that members of the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC) also participated, and 49 percent stated that other school staff were involved. A minority of the respondents (15 percent) indicated that teachers, parents, community members, various school planning teams, high school students, and elementary school pupils participated. A few schools also listed School Service Center staff, Chicago Teachers Union staff, and retired principals as participants in the school's expenditure planning process. Over 90 percent of those surveyed indicated that they approved the State Chapter 1 expenditure plan. More than 80 percent considered themselves an integral part of the State Chapter 1 planning process at their schools.

In responding to the question, "Did you hold at least **two** well-publicized council meetings regarding progress and problems with the School Improvement Plan?," 82 percent responded affirmatively.

In identifying persons involved in the development of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), 91 percent named the principals; 81 percent, other council members; 74 percent, PPACs; 62 percent, themselves; 58 percent, other school staff; and 7 percent, paid consultants. More than 70 percent of the respondents also reported using two Chicago public school documents, the *Systemwide Educational Reform Goals and Objectives Plan* and the *Comprehensive Planning for School Improvement*, in developing their SIP.

Most of the respondents (87 percent) indicated that there was an appropriate allocation of teachers and other staff in their schools to implement the School Improvement Plan.

Recommendations to Principals

According to the survey, LSC members advised principals in the area of staffing. The following chart shows responses for the last two years.

Staffing Tasks Assigned to Principals by LSCs

Task	1991 Percent Reporting	1992 Percent Reporting
Open positions	52	57
Shift positions	23	22
Close positions	14	13

Council members also indicated that they made specific recommendations to the principal in the following areas:

Recommendation	Percent Reporting
Provide periodic reports for the council	52
Implement specific school improvement activities	44
Organize various programs	40
Perform other administrative functions	23
Create contingency and backup plans	16

Specifically, councils indicated that they requested reports regarding expenditures, budgets, internal accounts, SIP monitoring, failure rates, staff development, and test results. School improvement recommendations centered around security, personnel, parental involvement, metal detectors, Chapter 1 programs, student achievement, and specific school programs. These programs included drug-free, after-school, and curricular activities as well as parent patrol. Administrative requests included constructive monitoring of staff, in-house detention, LSC paperwork, implementation of the SIP, and various written communications.

Councils also made recommendations in the following areas:

Change and Improvement in Schools

Area	Percent Reporting
Budget	76
New programs	71
LSC training	70
Building repair and maintenance	64
Security	55
Curriculum	49
Staff development	46
Disciplinary policies	44
Staff changes	41

Area	Percent Reporting
Attendance	41
Textbook selection	35
Student transportation	26

In addition, council members listed other recommendations for improvement in the following areas:

- Specific curricular and co-curricular activities
- Parent and community involvement
- Parent workshops and staff development
- School uniforms (dress codes)
- Fund-raising
- Information requests and reports

Council members indicated they instituted policies in the areas of:

- Personnel selection
- Student responsibilities
- Dress code
- Behavior at assemblies, in the lunchroom, etc.
- Restitution
- Budget
- Student performance
- Student transportation
- Special programs
- Attendance
- Curriculum.

Council Meetings

In responding to a set of questions regarding council meetings, 82 percent of the councils reported that they held **two** well-publicized meetings regarding the School Improvement Plan. The typical council member reported that their council met 10 times during this past year as compared to 12 times in 1990.

The table below indicates the significant reduction in the number of meetings.

Regularly Scheduled Meetings Held

Number	Year 1 - Percent	Year 2 - Percent
10 or less	25.1	57.1
11-14	42.6	28.0
15-20	15.0	13.3
20+	17.3	1.6

In responding to, "How many council members did not attend meetings regularly?," 41 percent reported zero, 22 percent reported one, 22 percent reported two, and 15 percent reported more than two.

With regard to the number of council seats vacant for more than three months, 74 percent reported none, 15 percent one, 8 percent two, and 3 percent three or more.

The most frequently used methods for announcing council meetings are listed below in rank order:

- Letters or notices hand-delivered by students
- Notices posted on bulletin boards in offices, classrooms, and hallways
- Letters sent through the U.S. mail
- Community newspapers
- CSC/PTA newsletters
- Signs/notices in community businesses and organizations
- Announcements over the school public address system
- Phone calls

In approximating the number of people who were not members of the council but who attended council meetings, the mean value reported was nine and the median value was six.

The majority of the councils (90 percent) reported providing an opportunity for public comment at council meetings and 80 percent indicated that they sought staff and public input in the policy development process.

Council members also provided information on the number of hours per week they devoted to meeting preparation, training sessions, committee work, meetings, and other LSC duties.

Hours per Week Devoted to Regularly Scheduled Meetings

	1991 Hours per Week	1992 Hours per Week
High Schools	1-2 (44%) 3-4 (26%) 5+ (30%)	1-2 (77%) 3-4 (17%) 5+ (6%)
Elementary Schools	1-2 (50%) 3-4 (28%) 5+ (22%)	1-2 (77%) 3-4 (18%) 5+ (5%)

In addition to the amount of time spent attending regularly scheduled meetings, council members were involved with other meetings and training sessions up to two hours per week.

In conclusion, the data indicate a reported reduction in the number and length of meetings. All respondent groups indicated, as they did for 1991, one to two hours of committee work each week plus one or two hours preparing for the meetings and participating in committee work. This suggests a minimum of two to four hours per week committed to council activities by individual members in addition to the three hours a week spent in and around the school on other council duties.

Council Organization

Functioning Advisory Groups Identified by Council Members

Group	Percent Reporting High School	Elementary School
Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC)	89	87
ESEA Chapter 1 Parent Advisory Committee	42	48
Bilingual Advisory Committee	30	38
Special Education Advisory Committee	32	19
Vocational Advisory Group	30	2
Security Committee	43	31
CANAL Core Planning Team	11	11
PTA or PTSA	39	62

Nearly 80 percent of the respondents indicated that their LSCs used a committee structure. In addition to the foregoing committees, some council members indicated the existence and operation of committees with the following titles:

Budget	Overcrowding
By-Laws	Principal Evaluation
Curriculum	Public Relations
Discipline	School Beautification
Dress Code/Uniform	School Improvement
Fund Raising	Staff Development
Interviewing	Text Book
Lunchroom	Training

At the elementary level, 87 percent of the respondents indicated the LSC and its committees sought input from their PPACs. The percentage reporting at the high school level was 94.

With regard to monitoring/implementing LSC policies, 60 percent of those participating in the survey said that they received periodic reports from the school staff while 30 percent reported that they had not. This is a 10 percentage point increase from last year. For programs funded with discretionary funds, 85 percent reported receiving oral and/or written reports about these programs and 10 percent said they received no information. The response regarding internal accounts was that 65 percent reported receiving oral or written reports and 28 percent said that they received no information. Only 66 percent of the respondents indicated their councils had a monitoring role.

Tabled below, in percentages, are the reports received by LSC members:

	Reports Received				
Topic	**No**	**Yes**	**Oral**	**Written**	**Oral and Written**
LSC Policy	30	60	-	-	-
Discretionary Funds	10	85	24	10	46
Internal Accounts	28	65	18	15	25

Training Areas

Reform legislation requires that Local Schools Councils must receive training in the following areas:

- School budgets
- Educational theory (pertinent to the attendance center's particular needs, including the development of the School Improvement Plan and the principal's performance contract)
- Personnel selection.

A wide variety of organizations provided training in 1991-92. Approximately two-thirds of the council members reported receiving training in reform legislation, school budgets, principal performance evaluation, Open Meetings Act, conducting effective meetings, and planning school improvement. About one-half of the respondents were trained in educational theory and practice, personnel selection, and the Freedom of Information Act. As a rule, high school councils received more training and reported a lower need for additional training than elementary school councils. Regarding staffing, 42 percent of the respondents indicated their councils implemented a personnel selection policy.

The following tables show how the council members responded to whether or not they had received training or needed more training in various areas. The second table indicates the sources used to implement or assist in this training.

	Percent Reporting					
	Elementary			High School		
Training received in--	**Yes**	**No**	**Need more**	**Yes**	**No**	**Need More**
Reform legislation	66	11	10	72	6	6
School budgets	72	7	12	73	5	9
Educational theory	57	14	11	65	10	4
Educational practice	55	15	9	58	11	5
Principal performance evaluation	68	11	9	63	9	7
Personnel selection	45	24	9	42	18	6
Planning school improvement	74	7	10	74	4	6
Conducting effective meetings	65	10	9	61	6	6
Open Meetings Act	63	14	5	68	7	5
Freedom of Information Act	56	17	6	65	6	4

Training received from--	**Percent**
Central Service Center staff	24
Paid consultants	20
Parent Education Center	17
Reform Implementation Office	17
Public interest groups	16
District Service Center staff	16
Project CANAL	9
Chicago Teachers' Union	8
Other	7
Lawyers (non-Board of Education)	6
Public officials	5
Law Department (Board of Education)	4

Likewise, other research has identified 70 independent organizations providing concentrated help to 180 schools (Designs for Change, 1992).

Of the 10 training areas surveyed, the two most important training needs are in the areas of school budgets and educational theory. The Open Meetings and the Freedom of Information Acts were the two areas ranked lowest in training needs. Further detail is provided in the next table.

Training Areas

Council Group	Reform Legislation			School Budgets			Educational Theory			Educational Practice			Principal Performance Evaluation		
	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More
Community	64.5	10.8	4.3	69.9	7.5	8.6	47.3	17.2	11.8	40.9	19.4	8.6	61.3	10.8	8.6
Parents	58.7	12.6	14.8	67.2	9.1	14.2	42.3	21.1	16.1	36.9	21.1	14.2	62.8	12.3	11.0
Teachers	64.5	12.9	9.2	69.6	6.9	15.2	66.8	10.1	6.5	68.7	10.6	5.5	66.8	12.9	9.7
Principals	86.3	2.7	4.9	86.9	1.1	6.6	82.5	3.8	1.6	79.8	4.4	2.7	80.9	3.8	2.2

Council Group	Personnel Selection			Planning School Improvement			Open Meetings Act			Freedom of Information Act			Conducting Effective Meetings		
	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More	Yes	No	Need More
Community	31.2	29.0	5.4	73.1	7.5	8.6	57.0	14.0	2.2	50.5	10.8	5.4	58.1	10.8	5.4
Parents	31.2	30.0	12.6	68.1	8.2	12.5	62.8	14.5	6.3	53.0	20.5	7.5	60.9	11.4	12.3
Teachers	40.1	28.6	8.3	73.7	8.3	9.7	59.4	15.7	4.1	54.4	18.4	4.1	64.5	10.6	7.8
Principals	78.7	4.4	1.6	87.4	.5	5.5	76.0	5.5	4.4	73.8	6.0	3.8	77.0	2.2	5.5

N.B. "No responses" were not included in this table for clarity.

Council Assessment and Involvement

Asked if their councils took actions which they deemed successful, 575 (over two-thirds) of the respondents listed the following as successful actions:

- Hiring and recruiting new staff
- Implementing full-day kindergarten
- Generating positive press and publicity
- Providing art, music, and computer programs
- Improving committee work
- Tutoring and after-school programs
- Implementing school dress codes
- Cleaning school rooms and facilities
- Improving school security
- Providing school laboratories
- Developing the School Improvement Plan

Survey respondents were also asked to rate the overall performance of their respective councils, the District Service Centers, and the Central Service Center on a five-point scale (1 = poor, 3 = average, 5 = exceptional). Results for both 1991 and 1992 are reported below:

Summary of Overall Performance Ratings

	1991	1992	Change
Respective Councils	4.00	4.01	+.01
District Service Center	3.39	3.47	+.18
Central Service Center	2.80	2.74	-.06

The councils rated the District Service Centers above average; the Central Service Center, below average; and themselves, highly. Only one-third (32.2 percent) of the respondents indicated that their councils conducted a self-evaluation.

Principals, in a consortium survey (Consortium on School Research, 1992), reported using the Central and District Service Centers for the following specific services during April and May 1992:

Principal Survey

Services Area	Percent reporting "yes"
Budgeting	82.4
Special education	69.8
Federal and state regulations	58.7
Sensitive personnel issues	54.9
School maintenance	48.2
Capital improvements	47.3
Staff selection	37.1
Improvement of curriculum and instruction	32.6
Local school council functioning and training	30.6
After-school programs	25.6
Human relations issues	25.1
Teacher-evaluation process	23.4
Lunch programs	22.7

Eighty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they encouraged the school community to help the LSC carry out its responsibilities. Typically, they reported the involvement of 11 additional parents, 8 school volunteers, 5 school community members, and 4 business organizations.

The percentage responses to the item, "Check all the following from whom your council sought information, assistance and training," is tabled below. The figure for training is repeated for comparative purposes.

Source	Percent Indicating Assistance		
	Information	**Assistance**	**Training**
Central Service Center staff	45	23	24
Chicago Teachers Union	26	6	8
Law Department (Board of Education)	34	18	4
Lawyers (non-Board of Education)	20	10	6
Parent Education Center	18	9	17
Project CANAL	10	6	9
Public interest groups	27	18	16
Public officials	27	23	5
Reform Implementation Office	40	23	17
School Service Center staff	43	30	16
Paid consultants	18	12	20
Other	7	6	7

The council respondents (91 percent) also reported welcoming the nearly 2,400 newly elected council members. They indicated that new members were met with a spirit of openness and welcome. The methods used can be categorized as hospitality, training, and involvement.

Hospitality

- Welcome dinner
- Icebreaker, name tags, place cards
- Welcome tea
- Introduction of old and new members
- Special meeting to introduce faculty

Training

- Council history update
- Whole-group training
- Personal contact by chairperson
- Parliamentary procedures

Involvement

- Inclusion on all subcommittees
- Allocation of responsibilities
- Assurance of equal partnership
- Review of by-laws
- Invitation to all school social events.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

Increasing school quality is vital to the improvement of student achievement. Certain instructional, environmental, and administrative conditions must exist in order to achieve excellence in education. Local School Councils continue to institute programs and policies that they believe will make their schools quality learning environments.

Survey results show that council members reported positive change and improvement in staff and student performance and school management since the implementation of school reform. The areas of change and degrees of improvement for 1991 and 1992 are tabled below. In only one category -- sufficient supplies -- did the percentage indicating "Worse" exceed the percentage indicating "Better."

Areas of Concern

1992				1991		
Better	**No Change**	**Worse**		**Better**	**No Change**	**Worse**
66	19	7	Instructional program, in general	66	22	2
43	32	5	Special education program	38	38	3
24	28	2	Gifted program	22	37	3
28	21	1	Bilingual program	34	25	2
41	20	1	Federal ESEA Chapter 1 program	42	21	2
66	18	2	Use of State Chapter 1 funds	•	•	•
50	30	4	Students' academic progress	48	31	3
48	30	5	Students' social progress	48	31	4
52	30	3	Students' attendance	45	36	5
45	33	2	Students' likelihood to graduate	30	27	2
49	29	9	Discipline	47	31	10
52	29	5	Safety	46	32	6
49	31	6	Building security	•	•	•
25	41	5	Drugs	30	34	4
49	29	3	Social program offered by the school	46	31	3
40	35	16	Condition of building	38	37	17
36	38	14	Condition of classrooms	36	41	13
37	38	12	Appearance of grounds	38	42	11
32	49	3	Amount of homework	30	52	3
54	30	3	Staff expectations for stud. lrng.	47	36	3
43	40	4	Parental expectations for students	41	39	4
50	33	4	Students' enthusiasm for school	45	34	5
26	17	47	Sufficient supplies	•	•	•
40	33	15	Appropriate textual materials	•	•	•
35	27	27	Sufficient classroom materials	•	•	•
55	26	8	Computers for instruction	•	•	•

•Data not collected in 1991

About half of the respondents thought that student progress was better this year. This was in addition to the perceived improvement reported last year. Improvements were also reported concerning specific instructional programs with two-thirds of the respondents indicating better use of State Chapter 1 funds. The school climate items -- discipline, drugs, safety and building security -- received positive ratings, although drugs showed the least improvement. Social programs offered by the school were again highly rated. Of all the items in the survey, building conditions, as a group, again elicited the most negative responses. The findings were mixed regarding homework and parental expectations while student enthusiasm and staff expectations were rated 50 percent or better in 1992. Items about supplies, materials, and computers were asked for the first time this year; all received relatively high negative ratings except computers.

Reform Concerns

In responding to the last open-ended question, "What is your major concern regarding school reform?," the responses were divided into four major categories: Finance, Central Administration, Future of Reform, and Lack of Participation (parents, community, teachers).

Finance

The major concern was funding. There are insufficient funds to sponsor a good school program or to provide for the proper upkeep and maintenance of the buildings. A number of respondents indicated anxiety about budget uncertainties and changes that ultimately affect the school after the School Improvement Plan is completed for the year. High school respondents were concerned that the definition of a basic program would leave even more children both unserved and underserved. The final issue for many schools is overcrowding and lack of space.

Central Administration

A significant majority of respondents indicated that Central Service Center administrators and staff and often the Board of Education do not really support the concept of school reform. Their perception was that the spirit of reform is not shared at all levels at Pershing Road. Decisions, dictates, and deadlines are not "school-level friendly." Furthermore, the central office prevents the independent functioning of schools and continues to be the main obstacle to reform. This anti-administrative attitude is also applied to certain principals who know the full range of choices regarding a decision but fail to share important information with their councils. This level of concern and the lack of knowledge base is a latent theme in the responses. Council members also perceive that their lack of input regarding school closings and other perceived local issues leaves them out of the real decision-making process.

Future of Reform

Many respondents worried that there will be an early end to reform. They felt that there is not enough time to deal with what they consider an overloaded agenda, and the belief that "making a difference" is not widespread. The reasons were often listed as a hidden, and not so hidden, agenda and the increasing politicization of the principalship. Others indicate that some LSC members are looking for complete power and/or using councils as a platform for their own ends.

Lack of Involvement

Although many comments in this area were not specific, the idea of lack of parental and staff involvement recurred time and time again. For the schools to work and make a difference, parental concern, support, and involvement is crucial. One respondent printed in bold letters, "PARENTS DON'T CARE!" She continued by stating, "Many teachers are rushing home ten minutes after class is over. There is not a sense of real commitment."

Additional concerns about reform which other research (Nowakowski, Stewart, Quinn, 1992) noted were in the areas of role clarity, authority, and accountability. Phi Delta Kappa, in a just-released study, *Annual Needs Assessment* (1992), found the following six primary current unresolved issues in education, in rank order:

- Finance/funding
- Student testing/assessment/evaluation (authentic, traditional, appropriate, meaningful, changes, level of use, contributing to improved instruction, individualized, advantages/disadvantages)
- Dealing with changing family values/structures
- At-risk students (slow learners, how to reach, meeting needs, effective programs)
- Reform/restructuring (process, direction, resistance to, for the 21st century)
- Parental support/concern/responsibility/participation/involvement with education (lack of).

These national findings mirror the results of this survey and report. Recommended solutions to many of these issues can be found in *Early Lessons in Restructuring Schools* (Liberman, Darling-Hammond, and Zuckerman, 1991).

CONCLUSION

Local School Councils continue to create changes in the hope of improving the quality of education at their schools. Council members volunteer many hours attempting to implement school reform with limited resources. All councils have made significant decisions yet press for total control. Increasing numbers have begun to realize that the resources needed to deliver the kind of educational programs Chicago's children deserve are not currently available. To reiterate General Superintendent Ted D. Kimbrough's current assessment of school reform:

> The cruel reality that our public schools are not adequately funded is also lacking the attention it deserves. Before we focus on academic achievement for each child and the money that ensures it, we must resolve the debate over school governance and the best ways to provide services to our schools. As we close this issue, we will see that our schools have ample supplemental resources, both human and financial, to empower themselves and their students....If we now focus on the pressing needs of our children, not ourselves, we will be of greatest service to them.